

not just about dairy farmers, this is dairy processors. This is grocery stores, and it is not only California. It is across the entire country. This has national implications to let producer-handlers game the system. This is about gaming the system.

So it is not confusing. It is not controversial, and if you look at the fact that they talk about a constituent being in California in a lawsuit that is being brought forth, that is simply not true. The lawsuit has been brought forth in Texas, and the person claims to be a constituent of Texas.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. NUNES. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman involved is a constituent of mine. I can take you to his farm anytime you like, in California.

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Speaker, all I am saying is the court case you cited is filed in a Texas court, and he claims to be a resident of Texas.

Mr. LEWIS of California. One of his major farms is in my district, and all the farmers around him in California are supporting his position.

Mr. NUNES. Well, I thank the chairman for that, but I do have to say that we have a differing opinion here, and I can provide the chairman with letters, if he would like, at a later date.

But with that, I want to thank, again, the House leadership and the ranking member and especially Chairman GOODLATTE for bringing this forward, and I hope that the House will pass Senate bill 2120 as quickly as possible.

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition of S. 2120. Although I acknowledge there is merit to the original intent of this bill, I am unable to ignore the harm it may cause for the small business dairy industry in light of recent developments. As this industry is an integral economic contributor to my district, and indeed Oklahoma as a whole, it would be negligent of me to endorse this bill and rely on good luck to protect my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, the dairy industry is complex and there are many legitimate competing interests. With this in mind, I commend my colleagues in both bodies of Congress who diligently worked to build a rare consensus while crafting this bill. I have no doubt in my mind that the original intent of this bill was narrow in scope, focused on regulating aspects of the milk industry in certain western states. In addition, I have no doubt that the crafters of this bill believed they were protecting smaller dairy farmers, processors, and producer-handlers outside of those states from falling under similar regulations in the future.

However, Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Department of Agriculture acted before Congress, issuing a final rule on February 24, 2006, establishing similar regulations as would be established by S. 2120. I must admit Mr. Speaker, this begs the question: Why is it necessary for Congress to now duplicate what has already been legitimately addressed by the USDA? I fear the only outcome may be to codify this regulation, thereby inherently suggesting that Congress

will endorse similar such regulations in the future. This is a precedent which I can not support. I believe in our government's regulatory process Mr. Speaker, and as such, I believe there is no longer any need for Congress to act upon this particular issue. Had the USDA not taken this action, I also have no doubt I would have felt much more comfortable with this bill.

Mr. Speaker, S. 2120, although originally well-intentioned and carefully crafted to insulate dairy farmers, processors, and producer-handlers outside of these particular western states from unintended consequences, has been outdated by the regulatory actions of the USDA. Should Congress pass S. 2120, it may only serve to set a dangerous precedent which could severely harm an important part of America's dairy industry in the future.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2120, The Milk Regulatory Equity Act of 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this bill comes before us today with the full support of the leadership of the House Agriculture Committee and the nearly unanimous support of the entire dairy industry.

As Ranking Member of the Department Operations, Oversight, Dairy, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee, I can speak to how rare it is for a bill to achieve such wide consensus and agreement among government officials and industry representatives.

This bill is good legislation that will close an unintended loophole created by past federal regulations. While most states determine their milk prices based on their Federal Milk Market Order Area, certain states have enacted legislation which authorizes state agencies to determine milk prices for intrastate milk sales. This then allows some out of state milk processors to be completely exempt from any minimum price regulations and creates an unfair market advantage. S. 2120 will fix this problem and place all milk processors on a level playing field.

Dairy operators in the Inland Empire of California, including Chino and Ontario—in or near my district—are being hurt by this loophole. Hard-working farmers all across America are facing the same situation, and we owe it to them to provide regulatory action that will help all dairy processors.

I want to commend Chairman GOODLATTE and Ranking Member PETERSON of the full Committee for their excellent work on this legislation.

I also want to thank Chairman GUTKNECHT of our Subcommittee for his leadership on this matter.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill and continue the federal government's tradition of offering American consumers consistently priced high quality milk.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to S. 2120, the Milk Regulatory Equity Act.

I think there well may be a need for Congress to consider legislation dealing with Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMOs). But the subject is too important to be handled the way this bill has been.

The suspension calendar is supposed to be reserved for bills that the relevant committees have reviewed and that are not controversial, which is why debate is limited and no amendments are allowed.

However, there has been no hearing on this bill and it has never been approved by any

Committee—in either the House or Senate—so there has been no opportunity to consider the testimony of anyone who might be affected, including at least one Colorado company that has told me of their objections to the bill as it now stands.

Before we make a change in Federal dairy policy that has been in place for 70 years I think it is appropriate to hear all sides of the debate. Because that has not happened, I cannot support the bill.

I urge all Members to join me in voting no today, so that the bill can receive a more careful evaluation and so that possible revisions can be considered in the Agriculture Committee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2120.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY RECOVERY ACT OF 2006

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4979) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify the preference for local firms in the award of certain contracts for disaster relief activities, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4979

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Local Community Recovery Act of 2006".

#### SEC. 2. USE OF LOCAL FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS FOR DISASTER RELIEF ACTIVITIES.

Section 307 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5150) is amended by adding at the end the following: "In carrying out this section, a contract or agreement may be set aside for award based on a specific geographic area."

#### SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the Corps of Engineers should promptly implement the

decision of the Government Accountability Office in solicitation W912EE-06-R-0005, dated March 20, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4979.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 4979, introduced by Mr. PICKERING of Mississippi, amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify the preferences for the local firms in the award of contracts for disaster relief activity.

The Local Community Recovery Act of 2006 makes it clear that the government can limit contracts to local communities devastated in disasters.

□ 1630

The Stafford Act has a preference for doing business with local firms because putting communities back to work is an important strategy for helping them rebuild their economy.

In the areas hardest hit by Katrina, the job market, local economy and tax base have been devastated. This legislation will put people back to work rebuilding their communities while simultaneously strengthening the local economy and tax base. Another common advantage of contracting locally can be lower cost and faster job completion.

I would like to recognize my colleague, Mr. PICKERING, for his dedication to bringing this legislation to the floor. Mr. PICKERING has been a champion of this issue and has worked to help the people of the entire gulf coast region. This bill is further proof of his dedication and efforts. Since Katrina ravaged the gulf coast, Mr. PICKERING has worked tirelessly with me and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to resurrect his district and all of the gulf coast region.

I would also like to thank Ranking Member OBERSTAR and Ranking Member NORTON for working with us to develop a compromise bill that encourages the Army Corps to move forward with its local contracts.

The amended version of the bill does not limit judicial review of any contracts. As a result, the bill we are considering enjoys bipartisan support, I repeat, bipartisan support, and I encourage Members to support final passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. I yield myself such time as I may consume, Mr. Speaker.

The legislation in its amended form before us this afternoon is the result of the finest of legislative action in which a substantive goal has been achieved through discussion and understanding of one another, understanding the underlying law and its application, and in this case, an administrative action that has produced a right result.

The objective in the Gulf States devastated by hurricanes, not just Katrina but Rita and Wilma and the ones preceding and the ones yet to come, is local recovery. That means not just restoring the physical needs of the communities, the homes, the businesses, the streets, the levees, the lighting, but also the businesses.

The objective of the Robert T. Stafford Act, which I must say I have had a very large role in shaping over the past 21 years with my then-colleague on the committee, Mr. Clinger, is to affirm that the administering agencies, that is, those administering the law and the funding, would give preference to local businesses to restore those businesses, to expedite completion of recovery work, and to achieve lower costs, because businesses locally know how to do the job better than out-of-State companies.

In this particular case, in the aftermath of Katrina, the Corps of Engineers responded by taking the action that law allows them. They issued a contract for debris removal in Mississippi that originally was given to a Florida company, Ash Britt. They decided not to renew that contract, because it was evident that the work was not going to be done principally by local companies and, instead, chose to issue three separate debris removal contracts to Mississippi firms to guarantee that local Mississippi companies would be selected for the contracts and to do so by limiting the bidding to Mississippi companies. The Florida company protested that bid to the Government Accountability Office.

Last week, the GAO issued its ruling, its decision in the matter of Ash Britt, Inc., with reference to the file number, dated March 20, and in the most important part said: "We think Ash Britt misses the point when it argues that some form of preference short of a set-aside also implements the Stafford Act's preference for using local businesses to clean up disaster-related debris. The question here is not whether some lesser form of preference might have satisfied the act's intent, but whether the preference chosen was an abuse of agency discretion. Since the language in the statute does not specifically restrict the application of the preference, and since the use of a set-aside is consistent with the statutory goal of assisting firms in the affected area, we do not view the Corps' decision to implement the Stafford Act preference with a set-aside as an abuse of the agency's discretion to implement this statutory scheme." And then they conclude with referring to previous GAO decisions in the matter.

That settles it. The Corps has the authority; that authority has been affirmed by the Government Accountability Office, and the contracting should proceed. The GAO decision, so clear, so precise, so unequivocal in my judgment and in previous experience with the Corps and with GAO, should ward off any lawsuit or further appeal by Ash Britt. I think they will be very wise to accept the judgment of GAO and allow the procedure to go forward.

The bill before us is a revised version of the legislation the gentleman from Mississippi introduced just before our recess and which we discussed at some length. I had some reservations about it, some concerns, especially the prohibition of judicial review. That has wisely been removed, as the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, has expressed.

So I want to make it very clear that we have had a very thoughtful, very constructive discussion with the gentleman from Mississippi, with the subcommittee staff, with GAO, and with the Corps of Engineers. And the language in this sense of Congress portion of the bill pending before us this afternoon, "It is the sense of Congress that the Corps of Engineers should promptly implement the decision of the Government Accountability Office in solicitation," and I don't need to repeat the reference, dated March 20, 2006, that should be very clear direction to the Corps of Engineers to proceed forthwith, get these debris removal contracts under way, and move ahead without concern or fear of further appeal by the contractor in this case.

I think it is a good legislative outcome. It is a good direction to the Corps. It will be good for people of Mississippi. It will be a good lesson for workers and smaller contractors in other hurricane-affected Gulf States. It will set a good precedent for the future.

I think that we have had a very fine result this afternoon, and I urge my colleagues on this side of the aisle and all Members to support this legislation.

I would further observe, Mr. Speaker, that my wife is from New Orleans. Her family was affected by the hurricane. We have just recently, just 2 weeks ago, spent time in New Orleans; went with family and friends to the 17th Street Canal, saw the levee break, saw the work of the Corps, the cofferdam set up to rebuild that portion of the levee, traveled to Saint Bernard Parish, saw the absolute utterly horrifying destruction of an entire 38,000-home area inundated, over the rooftops, homes floated away from their mooring, and debris still in the streets.

That debris needs to be removed. Those people need relief. They want to get back in their homes, they want to rebuild, and they are frustrated that companies that know how to do the work aren't being called on to do it.

This legislation will set the course, chart the future, give an opportunity for those who know how to do the job to get in there and do it and do it expeditiously.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING).

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your support, your leadership on these issues, and for your commitment and traveling to the Gulf region, to New Orleans and to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, your leadership on the committee and on the Select Committee on Katrina to find the solutions for the future storms and recoveries, but also to do everything you can to make sure that this Congress does the right thing for this region as we recover. I am extremely grateful.

To Mr. OBERSTAR, I thank you for working with me today in the best sense and tradition and civility of this place to find common goals and common ground to be able to help my people in my home State recover, rebuild and, most importantly, to lead the way for themselves.

As the Stafford Act clearly states, and Mr. OBERSTAR was here in the beginning of that act and has been intimately involved in all aspects of that over his career here, but let me read the Stafford Act and the committee language when it was first enacted.

In section 204 of the Disaster Relief Act of 1970, the Senate Committee on Public Works, which proposed the language, stated, "Preference is to be given to persons or firms who work or do business in the disaster area." The committee report discussed the rationale and justification for this provision. "One outstanding feature of the aftermath of a great disaster is the lack of ready cash. A Federal assistance program should be designed to revitalize the community by infusions of cash through the use of local people and business firms."

To be honest, this has not been done in this recovery. Unfortunately, it is a failure of the Bush administration in implementing the contracts for the recovery of this region. But the administration is trying to correct that action. Today, 95 percent of all Federal contract dollars, 95 cents on every dollar spent on Federal contracts, is going to out-of-State firms, not in-State, not community, not local, but out-of-State.

Now, why is it so important that local firms, local businesses, local communities lead the way? It is those local businesses that will pay local taxes to rebuild local schools, to make the contributions to the churches as they care for the people who are helpless, needy, hungry, and homeless. It is those companies that will pay for the rebuilding of the Little League ball parks. All of the community institutions and infrastructure are led by local businesses and local leaders, and it is those people who should be on the front lines, not at the back of the line in the recovery effort.

What the Corps of Engineers did in December was to try to correct that.

They set aside on a geographic preference consistent with the Stafford Act contracts for debris removal. And let me say this: In Mississippi alone, we have had more debris, as you can see from these pictures, more debris than any disaster in American history. Over 50 percent more has already been cleaned up than ever occurred in any disaster anywhere in America. What the Corps did in December was to say, in the future, going forward, we are going to let local companies lead the recovery and comply with the congressional intent and stated objectives of the Stafford Act.

Unfortunately, the incumbent contractor from out of State protested that action. They gamed the system to delay the implementation of those contracts. Three months later, the GAO rejects the protest, finds in favor of the Corps, finds in favor of the congressional intent of the Stafford Act, and says, in essence, the protest is baseless.

It is time, and this act urges the Corps, to immediately, to promptly move forward in the implementation of local contracts for local debris removal.

President Bush, when he addressed the Nation in Jackson Square in downtown New Orleans stated: "In the work of rebuilding, as many jobs as possible should go to the men and women who live in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama." What we are doing in this act is clarifying and reaffirming the original intent to make it possible that no one can litigate this or game this or delay this to keep local firms from leading the way.

Let me say this. As I look across to both sides, this body has been extremely generous to the people of Mississippi and New Orleans. We have appropriated billions, now over \$100 billion to the recovery of the region. The churches and the charities across this country have been compassionate, and their generosity has flowed down and poured into our region. Our people will be forever grateful. Mississippi is the most generous State in the Nation, according to IRS returns. We are the poorest State, but we give more per capita than any State in the Nation. We are a proud people, and we want to lead the way and work first.

□ 1645

We do not want to be at the back of the line. We want to be on the front line, cleaning up, rebuilding, restoring and renewing our region.

I urge bipartisan support of this action today so that our region can recover with the help, but not the dependence, not the displacement, not the replacement of our own people, our own economy, our own jobs; and I ask all of us to look at this legislation and to work with me and for the administration to keep its commitment and to keep the law and the intent of this legislation.

In closing, let me also ask the current contractors: do nothing as these

contracts to Mississippi companies go forward to disrupt, to sabotage, or to slow the work. Cooperate with us and partner with us, just as our companies have partnered with you as you led. Stand down. Let us stand up. Let us lead the way, and we can have a continued good relationship. But protest this, litigate this, fight this, sabotage it, and there will be bad will that will go forward and undermine the way that our communities and our country should work together.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Members for their support, and I thank the ranking member, Mr. OBERSTAR, as we continue to rebuild our region.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds to express my appreciation to Mr. PICKERING for those kind remarks. We have spent a very productive time together.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. OBERSTAR for his leadership on this matter and for forging this bipartisan agreement. I rise today in support of H.R. 4979, the Local Community Recovery Act of 2006.

I want Members to know I approve of this language allowing set-aside contracts based on a geographic region. Florida for years has pushed for more local company involvement. This is something that Florida has been pushing for after every hurricane has battered our State.

Every time contracts go to out-of-state contractors who have relationships with FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, Florida companies do not get the work. This provision will allow local communities to recover more quickly. It is important for all contractors to work with local companies and local workers who know the area and the best way to get the job done.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act provides assistance to States in response to natural disasters. I recommend that the agencies follow the law and allow local communities to recover from these natural disasters.

Mr. Speaker, on April 1, hundreds of us will be going to New Orleans. It will be my second trip to work in that area and to try to encourage local participation and to find out the status so we can come back and report to the Congress on the progress. I think every Member should go to the region and work in that region to make sure that the \$100 billion dollars that we are appropriating is spent in the local area.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express appreciation for the cooperation we have had this afternoon in working out this matter that should have been considered appropriately in committee

process. In the subcommittee, full committee we could have resolved these matters in an expeditious manner in a very expedited way. But failing the committee process, we have reached, I think, a very sound, very progressive and forward-looking outcome.

I want to restate section 2 of the pending bill, line 8: "In carrying out this section, a contract or agreement may be set aside for award based on a specific geographic area." This is unmistakable language. It reaffirms the original intent of the Stafford Act, reaffirms historical precedent, and states it very clearly in legislative language.

We intend to get this bill passed this afternoon, and I hope the other body will act expeditiously as well so we can make this very, very clear and proceed on the awards of these contracts and reestablish businesses in Mississippi, as the gentleman from Mississippi has so well and firmly and forcefully stated as a very strong and effective advocate for the people of his district.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your cooperation. It always seems to me that the gentleman from Minnesota and a gentleman from Pennsylvania are working on the FEMA program, Mr. Klinger, Mr. Ridge, and the gentleman's father, the first Mr. Shuster. Every time we do, we come up with a good result.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for those kind words.

The Local Community Recovery Act makes sense. As the ranking member pointed out, it clarifies and reaffirms the language in the Stafford Act. It also directs the corps to move forward quickly so we can see the cleanup continue to make progress in the Mississippi and in the gulf coast region.

I want to again thank Mr. OBERSTAR for his cooperation on this issue. Once again, the T&I Committee has come together in a bipartisan manner and moved forward for the betterment of this Nation. I also thank Mr. PICKERING for his leadership and in working so closely with the T&I Committee to put this together for what I think is going to be a very positive outcome.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4979, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### COMMENDING HAITI FOR HOLDING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to

the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 353) commending the people of the Republic of Haiti for holding democratic elections on February 7, 2006, and congratulating President-elect Rene Garcia Preval on his victory in these elections.

The Clerk read as follows:

#### H. CON. RES. 353

Whereas the Republic of Haiti held democratic presidential and legislative elections on February 7, 2006;

Whereas reports indicate that the elections were peaceful and that 2.2 million Haitians—more than 60 percent of registered voters—participated in the elections;

Whereas many Haitians walked miles on election day to reach a polling station and waited for hours in line to exercise their right to vote;

Whereas the participation of an overwhelming number of Haitians in the elections demonstrates the commitment of the Haitian people to democracy;

Whereas on February 16, 2006, Rene Garcia Preval was declared the winner of the presidential election with 51.15 percent of the vote;

Whereas on February 23, 2006, the White House announced that President George W. Bush phoned President-elect Rene Garcia Preval to congratulate him on his victory in the elections and to discuss cooperation in Haiti's economic development and the fight against the illegal drug trade;

Whereas the elections of February 7, 2006, are a sign of hope for the future of the people of Haiti;

Whereas violence and natural disasters have caused tremendous suffering and loss of life in Haiti;

Whereas the people of Haiti would benefit from efforts to achieve national reconciliation; and

Whereas the elected government of Haiti will need the support and assistance of the United States and the international community to ensure social and economic development and to improve the lives of the Haitian people: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—*

(1) commends the people of the Republic of Haiti for holding democratic elections on February 7, 2006;

(2) congratulates President-elect Rene Garcia Preval on his victory in these historic elections; and

(3) pledges its support and assistance for national reconciliation, democracy, and development for the people of Haiti.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this concurrent resolution that commends the people of Haiti for holding peaceful and democratic elections on February 7 and expresses the sense of the United States Congress that the U.S. should actively support efforts in Haiti to move that country toward national reconciliation, democracy, and development.

Further, the resolution acknowledges the Haitian people's needs for sustained support and assistance from the United States and indeed the international community to ensure social and economic development.

The elections took place February 7 with 2.2 million Haitians, over 60 percent of the registered voters, participating. There were only minor reports of violence and voting flaws.

This bill recognizes the perseverance of the Haitian people as they struggle to maintain democracy. Many Haitians walked miles on election day to reach a polling station, and they waited hours in line to exercise their right to vote. The participation of an overwhelming number of Haitians in these elections clearly demonstrates the commitment of the Haitian people to democracy.

I support the Waters resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 353, a resolution to commend the people of Haiti for the success of their recent election and congratulates President-elect Rene Preval on his victory in the elections. President-elect Rene Preval defeated a large field of candidates and won the election with over 51 percent of the vote.

The people of Haiti have suffered tremendously as a result of violence and natural disasters, and the elections are a sign of hope for the future of the Haitian people. This resolution pledges the support of Congress and the assistance of the United States for national reconciliation, democracy, and development for the people of Haiti.

Finally, this resolution embodies the hope that many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle share, that democracy, stability, and prosperity will be realized as Haitians move beyond these recent elections and put the turbulent chapter behind them. I urge my colleagues to show their support for democracy in Haiti by supporting this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my commendation and appreciation to the distinguished chairman, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), for his leadership and support of this legislation, and also our senior ranking member, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS). I do also want to thank my distinguished friend